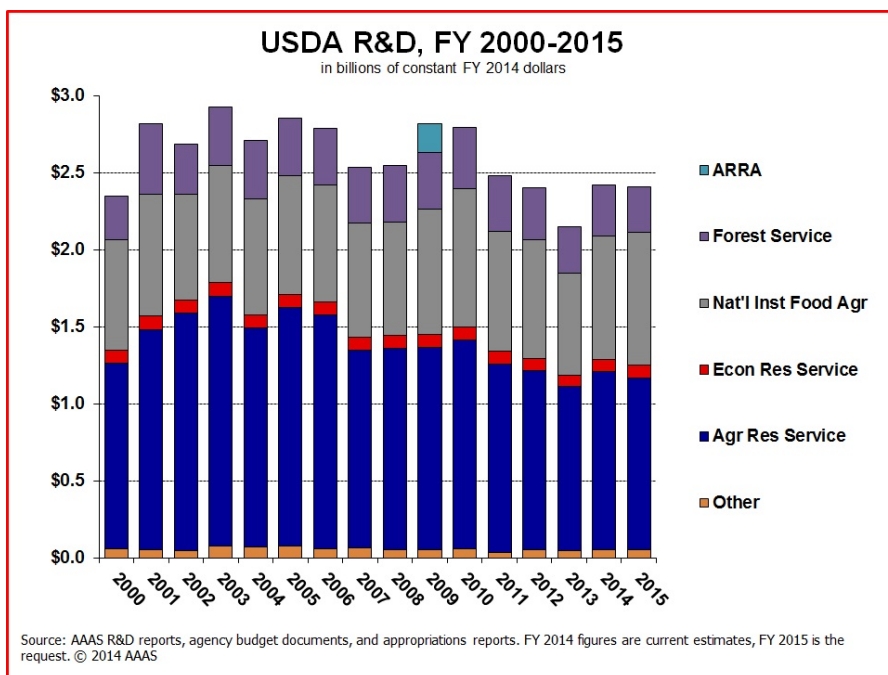


Who's coming for dinner? The answer, in case you're wondering, is "two billion more people." That's the population increase predicted for 2050. How are we going to feed those people?

One method is to cut down a lot of the world's remaining forests and plow the world's remaining grasslands. That's a bad approach environmentally: it will release a lot of carbon and destroy a huge amount of biodiversity. If we don't go that direction, we need to be able to feed the additional population while using very little more land than today. That means using land more efficiently — for example, feeding people grain directly rather than using the grain to feed cattle. But it also means improvements in crop yields and in the nutritional content of foods. Current trends in yields are not going to produce those improvements. (If you're looking for more details, look at the [Economist's](#) issue on the subject.)

What that means is that we need a lot more agricultural research. Yet research funding has been declining in recent years, as shown by this chart:



Agricultural research isn't exactly sexy — it's not as cool as finding new Earth-like planets or as appealing as medical research. And environmentalists, by and large, aren't big fans of large-scale farming to begin with, and tend to reject use of some techniques like GMOs to increase yields. But saving rainforests and controlling climate change are more important than these First World concerns. We urgently need more agricultural research to find sustainable ways to produce the huge amount of extra food we're going to need by mid-

century.

By the way, in case you're wondering, this is a completely disinterested argument. Berkeley doesn't even have an ag. school. Our ag. school ran away from home and grew up to become UC Davis.

Ag. research isn't sexy, but the environmental case is compelling — not to mention the food needs of those two billion people.